

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel claim 3 and amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A beam optical component for acting on a charged particle beam, comprising:
  - a first element having a first opening for acting on said charged particle beam;
  - at least one second element for acting on said charged particle beam;
  - a first distance piece positioned between said first element and said at least one second element to provide for a minimum distance between said first element and said second element; and
  - a first holding piece for abutting said first element to said first distance piece, wherein said first holding piece is directly attached to said first distance piece ~~to fasten said first holding piece directly to said first distance piece.~~
2. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 1, further comprising a second holding piece for abutting said second element to the first distance piece, wherein said second holding piece is directly attached to said first distance piece.
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 1, wherein the at least one second element has a first structured portion to be aligned to said first opening.
5. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 4, wherein the first structured portion comprises a second opening to act on the charged particle beam.
6. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 1, further comprising a third element having a second structured portion to be aligned to the first opening.

7. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 6, wherein the second structured portion comprises a third opening to act on the charged particle beam.

8. (Currently Amended) A beam optical component for acting on a charged particle beam, comprising:

- a first element having a first opening for acting on said charged particle beam;
- at least one second element for acting on said charged particle beam;

- a first distance piece positioned between said first element and said at least one second element to provide for a minimum distance between said first element and said second element;

- a first holding piece for abutting said first element to said first distance piece, wherein said first holding piece is directly attached to said first distance piece to ~~fasten said first holding piece directly to said first distance piece~~;

- at least one third element having a second structured portion to be aligned to the first opening; and

- a second distance piece to define a minimum distance between the second element and the third element.

9. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 8, comprising a second holding piece for abutting the second element to the first distance piece and a third holding piece for abutting the second element to the second distance piece.

10. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 9, comprising a fourth holding piece for abutting the third element to the second distance piece.

11. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 10, wherein the first distance piece or the second distance piece are three distance pieces.

12. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 10, wherein the first distance piece or the second distance piece are spherically shaped.

13. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 10, wherein the first distance piece or the second distance piece are spherically shaped bodies having at least one waist to reduce the lateral extension of the sphere.

14. (Currently Amended) The beam optical component of claim 9, wherein the first, second or third holding piece comprises a pin, a holding screw, a setscrew or a notched pin inserted into the respective distance piece for the direct attachment of the first, second or third holding piece to the respective distance piece.

15. (Currently Amended) The beam optical component of claim 9, wherein the first, second or third holding piece comprises respective nuts for abutting the respective electrode element to the respective distance piece.

16. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 9, wherein the first, second or third holding piece comprises springs for abutting the respective first, second or third element to the first or the second distance piece at predetermined pressures.

17. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 1, wherein the first, second or third elements are respective first, second or third electrodes.

18. (Previously Presented) The beam optical component of claim 1, wherein the first, second or third elements are respective first, second or third pole pieces.

19. (Currently Amended) A charged particle beam device comprising a beam optical component, the beam optical component comprising:

- a first element having a first opening for acting on said charged particle beam;
- at least one second element for acting on said charged particle beam;

a first distance piece positioned between said first element and said at least one second element to provide for a minimum distance between said first element and said second element; and

a first holding piece for abutting said first element to said first distance piece, wherein said first holding piece is directly attached to said first distance piece ~~to fasten said first holding piece directly to said first distance piece.~~

20. (New) The beam optical component of claim 1, wherein the first holding piece is attached to the first distance piece to abut the first element to the first distance piece.

21. (New) The beam optical component of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second elements comprises a recess adapted for receiving the first distance piece therein.